

England. — Churches, etc. —

Baptists. — Yorkshire and
Lancashire Association.

THE
M E A N S
O F
REVIVING AND PROMOTING
R E L I G I O N.

1795

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THE

MEANS



REVIVING AND PROMOTING

RELIGION.

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The MEANS of REVIVING and PROMOTING
RELIGION.



MINISTERS

OF THE DENOMINATION OF

PARTICULAR BAPTISTS,

ASSEMBLED in ASSOCIATION at BACUP, in
LANCASHIRE,

On the 27th and 28th of MAY, 1795,

Send CHRISTIAN SALUTATION to the several CHURCHES
they represent,

MEETING AT

ACCRINGTON,	ELLAND,	PRESTON,
BACUP,	GILDERSOLME,	RAWDEN,
BARNOLDSWICK,	HALIFAX,	ROCHDALE,
BLACKBURN,	HEBDEN BRIDGE,	SALENDINE NOOK,
CLOUGH FOLD,	LEEDS,	SUTTON,
COLNE,	MANCHESTER,	and
COWLING HILL,	MASBRO'	WAINSGATE.

DEAR BRETHREN,

HAVING the privilege of addressing you once
more in an Annual Letter, we take the oppor-
tunity to entreat, that you do not forget or neglect
our former Epistles. They were designed to promote
your welfare and comfort in the Christian life: and,
we would have you to preserve, review, and endea-
vour to improve them to that important end. Our
worthy brother Mr. Wood, has finished his course, and re-
ceived his crown. You shall see his face on earth no
more. But, by the letter on *Christian Zeal*, which he
drew up for the Association, he being dead yet speaketh.
May he be heard, and regarded! Our lives have been
mercifully preserved amidst abounding mortality. But

they are hasting to their close. We must shortly give up our accounts. Therefore, as there is need of precept upon precept, and line upon line, we think it meet, while we are in these tabernacles, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. We pretend not to any dominion over your faith or practice; but desire, as your servants for Jesus' sake, to be helpers of your righteousness, peace, and joy.

The religion which you profess, is not a cunningly devised fable. Its truth is attested by evidences which an honest mind cannot resist. The heavens declare the being and glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day, and night unto night, display the knowledge of his wisdom, goodness, and power. Your own observation and experience corroborate the testimony of the Bible, concerning the fall, depravity, and guilt of mankind. And, the good-tidings of redemption, by which sinners are encouraged to return to God, in hopes of pardon, acceptance, and life, are, without reasonable doubt, The glorious gospel of the blessed God. Herein the ancient prophecies are evidently fulfilled. The miracles of Jesus exhibit his power as the Messiah, and his kindness as the Prince of Peace. The rapid progress of the gospel in the apostolic age, is a striking testimony to its truth. The primitive preachers combated the prejudices, pride, policy, and power of a self-sufficient, wicked world; and they were gloriously successful. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal. They went forth in the power of the Spirit of God. The hand of the Lord was with them; and, through him, they prospered. The doctrines of your holy religion approve themselves to every unprejudiced enquirer: being manifestly worthy of its sovereign, wise, and gracious Author. They are just to God, and safe for man. Its precepts are pure and good. Its threatenings righteously agitate our fears, and its promises mercifully inspire our hopes of grace, more grace, final acceptance, immortality, and eternal life.

If,

[3]

If, as we trust, this divine religion hath come unto you not in word only, but in power, you have viewed and felt its excellent nature, and vast importance. It hath, according to the degree of its influence, enlightened your understandings; pacified your consciences; and purified your hearts. The truly religious know God, and love him. They fear him, and think upon his name. Sin is their sorrow, and Christ is their hope. Through him, the Way, they draw near unto, serve and worship the Father, by the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit. Governed by religion, you have a regard to God in all you do. His word is your rule; his glory is your end. Thereby, you are taught submission to his ordinances;---to do to others, as ye would they should do to you;---and, as you have opportunity, to do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.---*Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

Real religion is the one thing needful. Many things are valuable; but this is the principal. Destitute of this, whatever we possess, we are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; having no well-grounded hope; and being without Christ, and without God in the world. Our privileges are perverted; we are hurtful to our connections;---Sin and Satan are our masters; and dreadful is the end which awaits us. On the contrary, the people are blessed who know the joyful sound, whose God is the Lord, who fear him, and walk in his ways. For Christ is their life; God is their Father; the Holy Spirit is their Guide and Comforter. Their afflictions on earth are mercies in disguise: and heaven shall be their eternal portion. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

With such views of religion, every benevolent mind must lament its present circumstances among men. By
multitudes

multitudes of every rank it is openly opposed, despised, or neglected. And there is reason to fear, that many who profess to be its friends, are not duly attentive to its interests. We are much affected with the low and divided state of Christianity in general; and would gladly, in our humble spheres, be instrumental of promoting the union and prosperity of all its genuine friends. But we have nearer concerns. Primitive religion is languid among ourselves. There is a declension in its energy and life. The humility, diligence, affection, and godly simplicity of the first Christians, rarely appear. The Holy Spirit is grieved; and little success attends the preaching of the word. May we lay these things closely to heart! They require the immediate attention of ministers and people. We, therefore, propose to lay before you, in this letter, a few thoughts on the most likely means for the revival and promotion of vital and practical religion in our churches and congregations. Accordingly, we desire your close, and candid attention to the following things, which we apprehend to be of that description.

1. **SERIOUS** consideration on the evil nature of sin. It is hateful to God, and pernicious to man. Wherever it obtains, the progress of that which is good is impeded. There cannot be the shadow of a doubt, that sin is the cause of declensions in religion. If this be indulged, spiritual health and vigour decay. For instance,---Do not sensual gratifications take the heart from divine things? *Fleshly lusts war against the soul.* They are in arms against its purity, and prosperity.---Again,---Can that person thrive in the means of grace, who entertains an undue solicitude respecting earthly things? We may as reasonably expect corn to come to maturity which is over-grown with briars and thorns. *The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.* Farther,---Is not unnecessary communion with carnal men, detrimental to our best interests? We think, lamentable experience hath often proved it. Thereby we are exposed

posed to many temptations. And, perhaps, before we are apprized of our danger, we assimilate to their spirit, manners, and customs. *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Brethren, Mark these things, as dangerous enemies to your peace, usefulness, and prosperity. And, remember, that every allowed sin is inconsistent therewith. Search, and try your ways. Enquire into the particular causes of declension in your own souls, or in your societies. And, whatever they be, lament and forsake them. If these remain, the effect will not be removed. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.--- Your iniquities have separated between you, and your God. Therefore, now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments; and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.* We add,

2. Reflection upon the love of Christ. This appears abundantly in what he hath done for his church. He became surety for us in the everlasting covenant; and in the fulness of time, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. He loved us, and gave himself on the cross an offering and a sacrifice for us; dying, the just for the unjust, that he might deliver us from wrath, and bring us to God. Will not attentive consideration of his death, soften our hard hearts, and enkindle our repentings for sin? Let us think, how he endured the cross,---that in trials, for his sake, we be not weary and faint in our minds. Let us remember the expence at which he purchased his church, and, surely, it will induce us not to think any thing too much, which we can do, to promote the interests of Zion. In reflecting on his propitiatory sacrifice, with which the Father is well pleased, we are encouraged to return unto God, from our declensions; and are excited to a becoming walk, the love of Christ constraining us to live unto him,

him, who died for us.---Here is a fountain opened to us, for sin, and uncleanness. Therefore, when sin defiles our consciences, let us not wear it off by time, for this is very dangerous; but wash it away by application to this fountain. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. Farther, we recommend,

3. The diligent and proper use of the divine word. Its Author hath magnified it above all his name; and, if we know its worth and importance, we shall magnify it too. The holy scriptures are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ. By them we are quickened, strengthened, comforted, and preserved in the path of life. The neglect or improper use of God's word, is a very probable cause of the languishing state of vital godliness, of which we complain. For, thence proceed instability of mind, lukewarmness, and irregularity of conduct. Our having it in plenty, may be an occasion of its being slighted. However, let us see that this be not the case henceforward. Brethren, read the scriptures diligently. They are a valuable mine; but it must be worked. Meditate upon what you read, and pray over it. A blessing is pronounced upon the man, who delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates therein day and night.---*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.* Read the scriptures, to form your sentiments---to correct your mistakes, in faith or practice---and that you may know, what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. They have been the grand means of revival in the church of God, in former times. Of this we have illustrious instances. *Josiah*, king of *Judah*, was a pious reformer. He set his heart to restore the purity of religion; and this good work was greatly promoted, by the affectionate reading of the book of the law.---In the days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* there was a pleasing revival, of which the word of God was evidently the principal means.---For we learn, That *Ezra*, and his companions, stood upon a pulpit

a pulpit of wood, read the law, and gave the meaning; and the people understood the law, wept bitterly, and entered into a covenant with their God.---The blessed reformation, which took place in Europe in the sixteenth century, is another bright example---The scriptures were translated, and preached; the common people heard them, read them, and highly esteemed them. These were the principal means of effecting the glorious work: The darkness of Popery fled before the light of scripture. The word of the Lord was precious in those days*. May it be precious to us! May we, through the divine blessing, find it spirit and life to our souls! Again, we mention,

4. The careful cultivation of genuine religion, in your families. Whatever be the relation in which you stand, punctually discharge your duties, and endeavour to promote the order and piety of the household. But herein parents and masters are especially concerned. It is their bounden duty, to maintain the worship of God in their families;---to instruct the rising generation in the principles of religion;---to watch over their morals---and to inure them to constant attendance on the public service of the house of God. And this should be attended to with hearty concern, that those under their care may have the power, with the form of religion.---Use your utmost endeavours, in dependance upon the blessing of God: He encourages you to hope that

* "When Abp. Cranmer's edition of the bible was printed, in 1538, and fixed to a desk in all parochial churches, the ardour with which men flocked to read it, is incredible.---They who could, procured it, and they who could not, crowded to read it, or to hear it read in churches; where it was common to see little assemblies of mechanics meeting together for that purpose, after the labour of the day.---Many even learned to read in their old age, that they might have the pleasure of instructing themselves from the scriptures.---Mr. Fox mentions two apprentices, who joined each his little stock, and bought a bible; which, at every interval of leisure, they read; but being afraid of their master, who was a zealous papist, they kept it under the straw of their bed.---Such was the extacy of joy with which this blessing was received at that time, when it was uncommon."---*Gilpin's life of Cranmer*.

that your labour shall not be in vain. *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* We greatly fear there is a remissness among us in this important matter. And then no wonder, if our churches decline. To them our families should be as the nursery to the plantation.—If children, and young persons, are suffered to herd with vain companions, and roam at large in search of their own pleasure on the sabbath-day, What can be expected?—They contract evil habits; and the ways of Zion mourn. God is dishonoured; your hearts are pained; and the object of your prayers, and instructions, is frustrated. In some instances, we think, much injury is done to the cause, by parents indulging an idea of its being well, if their children attend public worship any where. For hence, they are permitted to ramble. This alienates their minds from our assemblies; and, may often be a cloak for sabbath-breaking. We should make it an indispensable point, that they worship God with us; unless there appears against it, principle of conscience.—*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*—*I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* Farther, we specify,

5. The filling up your places in the church, with constancy. Of your obligation to this, there can be no doubt. Your relation to the church, the divine command, and the example of the primitive saints, shew it evidently. Therefore, you should be conscientious in it, as an incumbent duty. Were every one so, the interests of Zion would wear a hopeful aspect. It is a likely mean, for the revival of our own souls.—*They who wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. His word doth good to them, who walk uprightly.*—Stedfast in our places, we strengthen and revive one another. *Iron sharpeneth iron—so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*—Your presence in the assembly, is more cheering to your pastors, than that of strangers, as you are

are the objects of their more immediate care.---*Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* We therefore entreat you, not to suffer any temporal employ, or sensual gratification---any unnecessary journey, or formal visit, to take you from your duty and privilege in the church of God. These must be displeasing to him, as contrary to the law of his house; and also, as breaches of his holy sabbath.---*Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.* If this is neglected, religion will droop. How is your practice in this respect? This is the day which the Lord hath particularly appointed, for his own honour, the promotion of his kingdom, and our spiritual advantage. May we employ every part of it, as sacred to these purposes! Our sanctification of the sabbath, and the revival of the church, are closely connected.---*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holiday, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

You have places in church-meetings.---How are they filled? What pity, you should be ever unnecessarily absent! For here your presence, and assistance, are particularly needful, to encourage and manage the discipline, order, and general concerns of the house of God. If these are neglected, the church cannot prosper. And, though your officers may be justly expected to take a leading part, you are all intimately concerned. Let the purity, peace, and honour of the church, lie near your hearts, and contribute all in your power to the promotion of them. If we connive at sin, under any consideration, How can we expect the presence of God? Holiness becometh his house for ever. Again, we recommend,

6. The exercise of mutual brotherly kindness. We trust, ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth,

truth, through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see then that ye love one another, with pure hearts, fervently. Pray for each other; and speak often one to another. Sympathize with each other, in affliction; and admonish one another, in times of danger. By love serve one another, in things spiritual and temporal. This will knit your hearts together, in the ways of God; for charity is the bond of perfectness. Hereby you have evidence, that you are born of God; and will manifest, that you are the disciples of Christ indeed. This will render your meetings comfortable, and your profession amiable. It is a very likely mean of promoting the cause of your Redeemer. Where brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commandeth the blessing.---*Be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*— We add,

7. Care to encourage your ministers, in their important work. On them, as instruments, in some measure depend the revival and progress of religion among you. But they are encompassed with infirmity; are men of like passions with yourselves. All their sufficiency is of God. Let them have a constant interest in your addresses at the throne of grace. Be earnestly desirous that they may have light, in their studies, and liberty in their pulpits---that their hearts may be in their work---that they may speak boldly as they ought to speak---and that their word may be clothed with power to the hearts of saints and sinners. Encourage them to visit you, at your own houses; and to be free and open, in conversation for your spiritual good. Communicate unto them the state of your minds. This will assist them in the choice of their subjects, and management of their public discourses. Encourage them to converse with, and catechize your children. This will assist you in forming their minds, and may be productive of much good. Lectures in the neighbourhood, on Lord's-day evenings, and at other suitable seasons, seem very likely to be useful;

encourage

[13]

encourage your ministers in this labour, by opening your own houses, or endeavouring to find other places proper for this purpose. Moreover, we particularly recommend,

8. A general conversation becoming the gospel. For, if your lives are immoral, the cause will be covered with reproach--the pious will be grieved--the weak will be stumbled, and your meeting-houses avoided. See then, that ye walk circumspectly. Be chaste, sober, peaceable, and honest--studious to have a good report of all men, and of the truth itself. Thus, you will stop the mouths of gainfayers; and prove, that Salvation by sovereign grace, is a doctrine according to godliness.---*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* Lastly, we urge,

Persevering, fervent prayer. Mourning our low estate, let us seek to the Lord for revival. When *Jacob* is small, by whom shall he arise, but by his God. It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. He hath promised his presence, and blessings, to his churches. Yea, glorious things are spoken of the city of God. Yet, he will be enquired of, to do these things to them. Accordingly, in declining circumstances, the friends of Zion, have given themselves in prayer.---*Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.*---*Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?*---*Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.* This language is recorded, for our imitation. Let us tread in this footstep of the flock. Our encouragement is great.---*For thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.*

Brethren, unite, cordially unite in earnest prayer, for the revival and increase of the church. Then will
Zion

Zion travail, and shall bring forth children. The disciples of our Lord, after his ascension, *continued with one accord* in prayer and supplication. Thus, they waited for the promise of the Father. The Spirit was speedily poured out from on high; and, on one day, there were added unto them, about three thousand souls. The Lord still hears, and answers prayer. His hand is not shortened; nor is his ear grown heavy. Suffer not disunion to hinder your prayers. Sensible of your own unworthiness, ask in the name of Christ. Seek his kingdom, and righteousness, in the principal place.---*Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

We wish you, to recollect and examine these ideas. As likely means, for the revival and promotion of religion among you, we have pointed out--serious considerations on the evil nature of sin--reflection upon the love of Christ--the diligent and proper use of the divine word--the cultivation of genuine religion in your families--filling up your places in the church with constancy---the exercise of mutual brother kindness---care to encourage your ministers in their important work---a general conversation becoming the gospel---and persevering, fervent prayer.

We doubt not you will receive these lines in love; and hope you will be upright and diligent in practical attention to them, as far as they are agreeable to the will of God. Indeed, this highly becomes us all. For the souls of men are of inconceivable worth: Satan is vigilant, and powerful in his opposition. The bulk of mankind are active and zealous, in the pursuit of transitory things. And, shall we be remiss in attempting the revival and promotion of that religion, by which Satan is conquered, souls everlastingly saved, and the blessed God abundantly glorified?

Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,

sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

B R E V I A T E S.

Wednesday, May 27th, we met at two in the afternoon.— Brother SUTCLIFF, of Olney, introduced divine worship by singing—explained the design of the association—and prayed. Brother PILDING, of Goodshaw-Chapel, preached from psal. cxxx. 5.—*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* And, Brother ODDY, of Haworth, concluded by prayer.

Met again at six in the evening.— Brother SHARP was chosen moderator, and parcelled out a hymn.— Brother BRICE, an approved preacher in the church at Salendine Nook, prayed. The letters from the churches were read,—and the moderator closed by prayer.

Thursday, the 28th, met at half past nine in the morning.— Brother MILLER opened the service, by singing and prayer. Brother LITTLEWOOD preached from Matt. v. 20.—*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Brother HARTLEY also preached from psal. lxxxv. 10.—*Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* And the service was closed by Brother SHARP with singing and prayer.

Met again, at two in the afternoon.— The circular letter, prepared by Brother STUTTERD, was read, approved, and ordered to be printed.

Agreed, That the next association be held at Accrington, on the Wednesday and Thursday in Whitfun-Week, 1796. The Brethren, HYDE, ASHWORTH, and FAWCETT, are requested to preach; or, in case of failure, Brother SHUTTLEWORTH, Brother MILLER, and Brother LITTLEWOOD.—Put up at the *Black-Bull*.

That the circular letter be drawn up by Brother LITTLEWOOD, on The Evidence and Blessedness of the Lord's Presence with his people.

STATE

STATE of the CHURCHES since the last ASSOCIATION.

Diminished	By death	16
	By dismission to other churches	15
	By exclusion	11—
		42
Added	Upon a profession of faith	25
	By recommendation from other churches	10
	Restored after exclusion	1—
		36
Decrease		6

This statement is made from the letters which were received.—But from several of the associated churches no accounts came to hand.—We hope this will not be the case in future.

FINIS.

24 MR 69

7